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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 49/75 G the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fiftieth session on the issue of assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them. The requirement for this report arose from the expression of grave concern by the General Assembly about the illicit transfer of small arms and their accumulation, which in many countries, particularly in the Saharo-Sahelian region, constitute a threat to populations and to national and regional security.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his effort to curb the illicit circulation of small arms and to collect such arms in the affected States which so request. The effort referred to was, principally, the advisory mission sent by the Secretary-General to Mali, at the request of that State, to study the best way of curbing the illicit circulation of small arms and ensuring their collection.

II. ACTION TAKEN

3. In February 1995, a further advisory mission was sent to the Saharo-Sahelian region by the Secretary-General at the request of the Member States in

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the region. A report on this mission is now being studied by the Secretary-General. It is expected that the conclusions and recommendations of both advisory missions will result in practical steps to alleviate the problem of illicit trafficking. The problems of illicit trade in small arms was also dealt with at a meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which took place at Brazzaville in March 1995.

4. It should also be noted that the question of illicit arms transfers is being dealt with by Working Group II of the Disarmament Commission under its agenda item 5 on international arms transfers. The Secretary-General welcomes the general recognition shown by members of the Commission of the need to find ways and means to curb the illicit arms trade. The Commission is due to finalize its work on this subject at its 1996 session.

5. The Secretary-General welcomes the work at the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (Cairo, 29 April to 8 May 1995), in particular their resolution on firearms regulation for the purposes of crime prevention and public safety, which deals, inter alia, with national, transnational and regional efforts to regulate trafficking in firearms. He also welcomes the recommendations of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Vienna, 29 May to 9 June 1995) to the Economic and Social Council to improve international efforts to promote regulation of the trade in firearms. The Secretary-General also notes with appreciation the work plan proposed by this Commission to gather data from Member States on the situation on the regulation of the trade in firearms and to hold interregional workshops on this subject. He will ensure that the Centre for Disarmament Affairs in New York cooperates closely with the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch in New York cooperates closely with the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch at the United Nations Office at Vienna on future efforts in this area.

6. In its resolution 49/75 G, the General Assembly invited Member States to implement national control measures in order to check the illicit circulation of small arms, in particular by curbing the illegal export of such arms. It also invited the international community to support efforts made by the affected countries to suppress the illicit circulation of small arms which is likely to hamper their development. Other than the welcome efforts in the Disarmament Commission and the activities outlined in paragraph 5 above, no reports have been received from individual Member States on any action taken.

III. FUTURE ACTION

7. The Secretary-General is encouraged by the increasing international recognition of the serious problems caused by illegal arms trafficking in various regions of the world and urges that the momentum of effort among Member States to take practical steps to deal with this grave problem be increased. This would be a major step forward in alleviating a problem which causes widespread suffering among civilian populations and is a major cause of instability in a number of countries, particularly in the developing world.